

# His Artibus

Artist, Her/His Environment and Artwork.

Possibilities of Artists' Biographies in the Present Day

## **II. Biennale of the Centre for Early Modern Studies**

**Department of Art History, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University**

**Online on Zoom May 27th – 28th, 2021**

## **ANNOTATIONS**

### **I. The artist's hand and the period mind**

**Katarína Beňová**

**Problems of so-called travelling artists in Austria and Hungary at the turn of the 18th and 19th century**

Art at the turn of the 19th century is often associated with the Enlightenment, bringing new challenges for Central Europe. The adaptation of various aspects and phenomena of the new trend of classicism and gradually romanticism became typical in the fine arts, while more traditional forms of visual representation based on the strong local tradition of the Baroque and Rococo still lingered on. A typical aspect of the gradual acceptance of this new direction was the work of travelling artists (so-called Wanderkünstler) in our region. These include, for example, the German painter Achatius Gottlieb Rähmel (1732 - 1811), who was active in Vienna and Bratislava, Johann Donat (1744 - 1830), active in Vienna and Pest, or the Danish painter Ján Jakub Stunder (1758 - 1811), as well as several more or less forgotten artists of the time. They were often interconnected by a similar fate, and they were figures connecting the artistic environment of Central Europe, especially with the German-speaking cultural space.

In the period under review, the position of artists changed, the importance of painters and sculptors trained at art academies increased, as well as the demands and tastes of clients. At the same time, the aspects that influenced the intensity of travelling artists' activities were their personal contacts, affiliation with the social class of Freemasons, as well as the question of their confession of faith. This topic opens questions of methodological approach, as it is possible not only to rely on the geography of art or microhistory but also to develop a discussion in a broader context, such as sociology of art.

**Žaneta Marvanová**

**The sacral architecture between 1781–1849 in Moravia and Austrian Silesia. Autonomy of the artist's personality and distinctive status of artists**

The paper will deal with the distinctive role of the architect in the context of other figures who participated in the creation of sacral architecture of the three Christian denominations of the late 18th century and the first half of the 19th century in Moravia and Austrian Silesia. The goal is to give an idea of the status and possibilities of artists in a specific socio-cultural framework, which significantly defined the resulting work of art. Creating a modern clerical apparatus, weakening the influence of local aristocracy, emphasis on the sovereign control of the monarch, the establishment of a new relationship between the state and the church and the policies

of religious tolerance were aimed at unity and utilitarianism of form not only within one building but in the whole architectural production in the monarchy. Churches and chapels, as well as their furnishings and resulting appearance, were primarily determined by clergy, representatives of parishes and congregations, local nobility or funds and associations, all coming to terms with the local artistic tradition and the specific religious situation. In this context of Josephine classicism, the artist had to deal with various figures and with official state requirements or restrictions. In this sense, the building culture in Moravia and Austrian Silesia at the turn of the 19th century challenged the autonomy of the artist's personality and his personal style (although their role is not and cannot be neglected), finding his character and experience rather in local connections and period conditionality.

## **Tomáš Valeš & Jan Galeta**

### **From the biographical dictionary to the biographical method? Notes on art history in Moravia**

The paper will focus on a topic that raises an unceasing train of questions in the reflections of both authors. Is it possible to uncover, at least in part, the origins of the ongoing popularity of the biographical approach in Czech and Moravian art history? (An approach, which is evidenced by several recent art historical biographies). Furthermore, if we ask how and who constituted the 'canon' of the main artistic figures who create the backbone of art historical narrative in our region, will we really get to the answer? The evaluation of the role of biographical models from the late Baroque (for example, Jan Petr Cerroni, Ondřej Schweigl) to the 19th century (Ernst Hawlik, August Prokop) will serve as the starting point of our reflections. Through learning about the mechanisms of these biographical models, it is possible to evaluate their impact on current methodological approaches and examine whether they still affect us or not.

## **Katarína Kolbiarz Chmelinová**

### **Between expertise and fiction. A survey of the Slovak monographies on artists of the 17th and 18th century after the year 2000**

In Slovak art-historical writing after 2000, monographs of artists active in the 17th and 18th centuries are rare. The paper is a probe into the issues focused on current Slovak-language presentations of artists permanently or temporarily settled in the territory of today's Slovakia. Through the analysis of monographic publications (Barbara Balážová, Katarína Beňová, Katarína Chmelinová, Jozef Medvecký, Mária Pötzl-Maliková), it will review their character between expertise and fiction. Furthermore, the paper will ask questions about the emphases of these biographical interpretations and their position in relation to Slovak art-historical writing, as well as to relevant foreign biographies of artists whose works are documented in Slovakia. At the same time, it is an attempt at a territorially rooted consideration of the reasons for the low interest of art historians in works of the 'artist and his work' type at the time of the 'artist's death'. Finally, it is also a reflection on the possibility and functionality of applying the concept of an artist's monograph to the specifics of the Slovak / Central European territory.

## **II. Myth of the Artist and Reality**

## **Radka Heisslerová**

### **Myths, legends and curiosities in biographies of Prague baroque painters**

Various stories, which have gained credibility through their frequent repetition, fill the biographies of a number of Baroque artists to this day. How does an archivist approach such legends and the genre of biography in general? Can the actual events be even more colourful than such tales? The paper will focus on specific passages from the lives of famous and lesser-known Baroque painters from Prague, which will serve as examples indicating the possible answers to these questions.

## **Klára Zářecká**

### **The Elogia as a source of knowledge on the life and work of the Jesuit artists**

In recent decades, the academic interest of Czech historians and art historians (e.g. Kateřina Valentová-Bobková, Petra Oulíková) has led to a fundamental deepening of knowledge of early modern

written sources of the Society of Jesus, which 'allowed to revive many that would remain dead'. Elogiums of the order members belong to the historiographical type of archival sources whose content can significantly contribute to understanding the members' life and work. Elogiums were created within the order's environment to commemorate and accentuate the virtues and merits of deceased members of the Jesuit order, emphasising the rules and specifics of the order's life. They contain basic information of a biographical character and, in the case of artists, mention their artworks.

The paper will focus on revising the present biographical knowledge of artists who were members of the Society of Jesus in the 17th and 18th centuries (e.g. Václav Ryněš, Josef Špatný). Based on a critical evaluation of the type of archival source, with the support of other Jesuit sources and the results of previous research of particular elogiums of Jesuits artists working and living in the Jesuit college in Hradec Králové (e.g. Ch. Reiffel, F. Rosinus, V. Fast ...), the paper will present possibilities of using these sources to explore the artist in the context of everyday life and his role as a creator of artworks associated with the presentation of the Jesuit order.

## **Zdeněk Kazlepka**

### **Johann Caspar Füssli and his biography of the painter Jan Kupecký (1758)**

Johann Caspar Füssli compiled the painter's biography (Leben Georg Philipp Rugendas, Und Johannes Kupezki) entirely in Vasari's tradition *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*. The biography was then taken over by others, including art historian Eduard A. Safarik (1928–2015). However, the classic study by Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz *Legenda o umělci* ('The Legend of the Artist') and new findings from social sciences (sociology, psychology) lead us to reconsider the conclusions of Füssli's 'narrative' and evaluate both the life and work of Jan Kupecký (1666–1740) from a different perspective.

## **Alena Volrábová**

### **Reality or mystification? Possibilities of viewing Václav Hollar's work**

Václav Hollar (1607–1677) is one of the artists whose work and life were closely intertwined. As a graphic artist and draftsman, he portrayed the landscape, the city - urban architecture - and the people he met, with such conviction that, for example, his *Long View of London* became the basis for reconstructing the city destroyed by fire years later. Moreover, based on many of his landscapes, researchers have partially reconstructed his varied life stories. But were his depictions really that accurate? Were they drawn from life, were they dated correctly? A closer look at many of his works shows that even though the works usually give the impression of accurate depictions, they also contain an element of artistic license, and at other times it is not possible to rely on exact dating, although it is inscribed by the artist himself. We will try to understand why this was the case, how Hollar probably conceived his work and the ways in which it communicated, and what it means for us today.

## **III. From the artist's life to his work**

## **Olga Kotková**

### **Painter Augustus Cordus: his life and work**

Augustus Cordus (c. 1520 / 1524–1584) belonged to the half-forgotten painters barely mentioned by the lexical literature of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. In the previous era, however, Cordus enjoyed considerable attention, especially in topographically oriented publications that mapped the artistic production of the Loket region. He excited interest mainly thanks to several biographical reports that recorded his remarkable life story, conditioned by his origins – Cordus came from a prominent German family, his father was an important naturalist, doctor and poet and his older brother Valerius also built a great career, while August was not very successful professionally. Recent art history moved from the painter's biography to examining his oeuvre. It turns out that Cordus's work, first associated with Dresden and then with the region of north-western Bohemia, is in many respects more interesting than the episodes from his life. The contract for the most important commission in his life – the retable for the Loket parish church – was closed between Cordus and the town council in 1577 and its transcription has survived until today. This unique document bears witness to the specific conditions and complex period circumstances that led to the creation of this work.

**Petr Tomášek**

## **The Monograph<sup>3</sup>: hardship and pleasure concerning the first monograph of the artist family Charlemont**

The exhibition 'Fenomén Charlemont / Eduard, Hugo a Theodor' ('The Phenomenon of Charlemont / Eduard, Hugo and Theodor'), which took place in 2018 in the Liberec Regional Gallery (repeated at the South Moravian Museum in Znojmo in 2019), launched preparations of a publication (monograph) on the lives and work of several artistic figures from the Charlemont family. These artists were active in Moravia and Vienna in the 19th and early 20th centuries and have long been neglected not only in Czech but also in Austrian art history. Until recently, there were many uncertainties about the family's history, including basic biographical data. The publication, which was released this year, aims not only to bring to light some of the hitherto widespread myths about the family's origins but also to introduce the artwork of individual family members to today's readers and viewers, which is, in my opinion, the fundamental (and still topical) role of the monographic genre.

**Consuelo Lollobrigida**

## **Maria Luigia Raggi and Plautilla Bricci**

How can we find women artists in the past, in the Renaissance and Baroque? If we base our research only on 'male literature', such as Vasari, Bellori or Passeri, we will not have the possibility to discover the amazing hidden world of the presence of women in art and architecture history. Indeed, the use of accredited biographies of the past centuries is limited. Most of the women of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries are not present, for instance, in Bellori or Passeri's works. In the last fifty years, thanks to the pioneering studies of Linda Nochlin and the American school, the history of women in art has been incredibly expanded, and scholars have been provided with new approaches, methodologies, and tools.

On my side, as an author of two biographies/monographs about two women artists in early modern times, Maria Luigia Raggi and Plautilla Bricci, one of my principal priorities is – and has been – that of creating their catalogues through the parallel reconstruction of their lives, using literary sources, poems, novels, essays, treatises etc. In particular, when I decided to study both Maria Luigia and then Plautilla, there was very little information about either their lives and work. Therefore, I had to scout many different sources to eventually find and reconstruct all the tesserae of this fascinating, though challenging, puzzle. The paper aims to use these two women as case studies to provide a methodology that could crisscross other scholars' working instruments.

**Vladimír Mañas**

## **The role of a musician in the society at the turn of the 16th and 17th century. The Case of Nicolaus Zangius**

Nicolaus Zangius was relatively productive composer in the genre of German secular songs, but as far as Latin liturgical compositions go, he published only one collection of motets for six voices. This is, however, primarily a modern perspective: viewing musicians of older epochs through their work, just as printed collections are understood as primary artefacts and documents of artistic patronage, even though they should be viewed rather as certain echoes. Music as a gift appears in its primary form as the realisation of sound: it does not necessarily have to be a composition, but it can be, for example, an improvised production. Zangius's case aptly reveals that the relationship between a musician and his patron could, in addition to the mentioned situations, also include the mediation of musicians and the realisation of music productions required by the patron.

Zangius's story demonstrates his versatility, and tales of his documented and presumed presence at various important festivities throughout Central Europe have an almost mythical aura. This paper will outline Zangius's social contacts, from monarchs and important aristocrats to city councils and individual townspeople. When he served as the bandmaster of the city church in Gdańsk (1599 to 1607), Zangius also travelled to Dresden, Prague (where he became an imperial servant), Augsburg, and Cologne. From 1604 to 1606, he also moved between Vienna and Moravia in the service of Karl of Liechtenstein, who was the Moravian provincial governor at that time and who, probably with Zangius's help, created his own instrumental ensemble, called muzika.